Governments must release their matching share to the DRDAs/ZPs within 15 days of release of Central Assistance. Diversion of resources from one District to another is not permitted. The proposal for release of second instalment by DRDAs/ZPs complete in all respects should be submitted by 31st December every year. Both physical and financial audits of schemes by local fund auditors or by Chartered Accountants listed in the panels of State Governments or AGs or C&AG are compulsory.

Unconstitutional/illegal decisions by panchayats

†889. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of unconstitutional and illegal decisions taken by several Panchayats in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the measures taken or being taken by Government to have control over such practices; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (d) Government have not received any complaints of unconstitutional and illegal decisions taken by Panchayats in the country.

Panchayats as defined in Part-IX of the Constitution means only an institution by whatever name called of self-Government constituted under Article 243 B for the rural areas. It is for State Governments to take action under the law against unconstitutional or illegal decisions taken by other institutes calling themselves "panchayats".

Strengthening of Panchayati Raj system

890. SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to formulate some action plan to strenthen the Panchayati Raj system;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it would be a Centrally sponsored project; and

(d) what is the action plan of Government to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system in Orissa under the Centrally sponsored Panchayati Raj Project?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Article 243G of the Constitution provides for the devolution of powers to empower Panchayati Raj Institutions, including Gram Panchayats, to function as "institutions of self-Government" for the twin purpose of (i) making plans for economic development and social justice for their respective areas, and (ii) implementing programmes of economic development and social justice in their respective areas, for subjects devolved to PRIs, including those listed in the XI Schedule, and subject to such conditions as the State may, by law, specify. Schedule XI of the Constitution provides for the devolution of powers to Gram Panchayats and Panchayati Raj Institutions with regard to subjects that have a bearing on economic development and social justice in rural areas. A joint programme of action has been chalked at the seven Round Table held last year between the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj and State Ministers of Panchayati Raj to ensure that on the basis of Activity Mapping, Panchayats at various levels are devolved with funds, functions and functionaries to enable them to emerge as institutions of self-Government. Efforts are also being made to institutionalize social audit measures through Gram Sabhas go that Gram Panchayats are made responsible to the Village Community as a whole.

The Minister has now initiated a process of visiting each of the States/ UTs to review with the authorities concerned the progress in implementing the points for action contained in the compendium. A Committee of Chief Secretaries of States and State Panchayati Raj Secretaries has been constituted under the Chairmanship of the Secretary (Panchayati Raj) to monitor the progress on the implementation of the 150 recommendations of the Seven Round Tables. Two review meetings of the Committee have so far been held on the 11th April, 2005 and 29th June, 2005. A Council of Ministers of Panchayati Raj of States/Union Territories has been constituted under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Panchayati Raj, Government of India. The inaugural meeting of the Council, which is on the subject of Panchayati Raj, will be held 5th-6th August, 2005 at Kochi. It is

expected that these efforts will accelerate the pace of implementation of provisions of Part IX, read with Article 243ZD of the Constitution, and thus bring about greater conformity, in both letter and spirit, in all States and UTs includng Orissa to the Constitutional provisions of Panchayati Raj.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Caste panchayats in rural areas

891. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many caste panchayats are functioning in the rural areas in the country;

(b) what steps Government have taken to make these illegal panchayats non-functioning and powerless; and

(c) whether any member of elected panchayats are active in these caste panchayats and if so, what action is being taken against them?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) Ministry of Panchayati Raj is responsible for the work of advocacy and monitoring of the implementation of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 in letter and spirit in the different States and UTs.

As defined in Part IX of the Constitution "Panchayat" means an institution by whatever name called of self-Government constituted under article 243 B for the rural areas. Article 243B States that there shall be constituted in every State, Panchayats at village, intermediate and district levels in accordance with the provisions of Part IX, with the exception that in a State having a population not exceeding twenty lakhs, Panchyats at the intermediate level may not be constituted.

The functioning of caste panchayats does not fall under the purview of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. It is for the State Governments to take action in the matter.